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A town-clerk and town-sergeant received small salaries, but the list of paid officials is always very short (p. 397).

In municipal service, in relation to the church and also to rural economy, customs and characteristics that are found in English life to-day had all come into existence by 1350. Some of them were already well-established. It is this fact which makes Miss Bateson's book of interest and permanent value. It is a book which should specially commend itself to educated Americans who are contemplating a sojourn in England. A study of it will help to the understanding, not only of the building of the cathedrals and abbeys and castles, and of their place in medieval life, but also to a comprehension of the present-day organization of the cathedral staffs, as well as of municipal conditions and some phases of modern rural economy.

There is a chronological table of twenty pages, beginning with the crowning of William the Conqueror and ending with the Black Death of 1349. Illustrations are numerous, but most of them have no close relation with the text.

EDWARD PORRITT.

The Oligarchy of Venice: an Essay. By GEORGE B. McCLELLAN. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. 1904. Pp. iv, 216.)

MAYOR McCLELLAN's purpose is to trace the origin, growth, and ascendancy of the oligarchy at Venice, and to show that, from the moment the oligarchs got control, the republic inevitably decayed. He has no difficulty in accomplishing this to his own satisfaction and to the conviction of any reader who supposes that because a demonstration is simple it is necessarily true. Most of the glittering generalities with which histories of a certain kind are now filled out owe their semblance of truth to the careful omission of inconvenient details. But in the story of Venice one must not make the oligarchy the scapegoat of all her ills unless he is prepared in justice to show how essentially it contributed to her prosperity.

One would scarcely realize from Mr. McClellan's pages that after the oligarchy was completely organized, Venice did anything but go to pieces. Yet for her to make head at all against the League of Cambray, and to recover her strength so far that she was still formidable for two centuries, was the best proof that the oligarchy was not palsied. To save herself from the Spanish plots, at the time when Spain stood paramount in Europe, certainly does not argue feebleness. Historians are accustomed to sing the praises of sturdy Elizabethan England and of brave little Holland for successfully resisting Philip II.; Venice deserves scarcely less credit for circumventing his successors, but Mr. McClellan fails to give her credit for the service she then rendered. Even less does he indicate her epoch-making resistance to the interdict in 1606, when, under the counsel of Sarpi, she drew the sting of ecclesiastical interference in political affairs. And surely the immense burden which the oligarchy bore during the seventeenth century in its combat with the Turk ought not to be ignored.

But Mr. McClellan's excuse may be that he was concerned only to analyze the formation and character of the political machine at Venice, not to write a history of public events. If this be his position, it illustrates the inadequacy of mere constitutional studies or of descriptions of governments as they exist on paper. Unless an analysis of the Venetian oligarchy be supplemented by a statement as to its actual working, we are left with only a theory, an abstraction, to speculate over. The business of the historian is to know not merely what ideals men put on the statute-book and disregarded, but what they did and what they attempted to do. A stranger from reading the municipal ordinances of Greater New York might imagine that metropolis to be the New Jerusalem, instead of a political cesspool. So conversely, although Mr. McClellan would have us suppose that an oligarchy is almost necessarily bad, we insist on asking to have it explained how the assumed bad Venetian oligarchy so efficiently saved the republic against the League of Cambray, and the Spaniards, and the interdict, and maintained that gallant struggle against the Turk.

Questions deeper still Mr. McClellan passes by unnoticed; for instance, we should like to have discussed the contrast between the stability of Venice and the political hysteria of Florence or Genoa. That would lead to a broad consideration of the terms on which any stability could be attained in Italy from the days of Charlemagne to those of Charles V. And somewhere in the essay we ought to learn how it was that if Venice was the oligarchy, and the oligarchy was detestable, nevertheless the Venetians had a beautiful devotion to Venice. Mr. McClellan has given us, at the most, a skeleton of the political development, but suppose you saw in a museum the skeleton of Bismarck or of Cromwell, how much would that alone help you to know what the man was, thought, or did?

W. R. THAYER.

Christopher Columbus: his Life, his Work, his Remains, as Revealed by Original Printed and Manuscript Records, together with an Essay on Peter Martyr of Anghera and Bartolomé de las Casas, the First Historians of America. By JOHN BOYD THACHER. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1903-1904. Three vols., pp. x, 670; vi, 699; vii, 775.)

THIS is the most voluminous and sumptuous work devoted to Columbus that has ever been published in the United States. It is not merely magnificent in appearance and proportions, but its contents are based on a more conscientious study of the original sources than has been the case with any life of Columbus published in this country since Irving's. In addition, it brings within the reach of American students considerable material hitherto accessible only in the *Raccolta di Documenti e Studi* published by the Italian government or in the Duchess of Berwick y Alba's *Nuevos Autógrafos de Cristóbal Colón y Relaciones de Ultramar*. In the preparation and publication of these volumes Mr.